

Emotional Maturity: Characteristics and Levels

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Abstract— "Mature" means a completed natural growth. Emotional maturity is not related to physical maturity which is expected to be but, does not grow with our chronological age. Emotionally mature people are sensible who do not whine, crib or play the blame game. They have full control over their lives. They reflect on their lives and on the role that they play in other people's lives. Emotionally mature people lead a well-adjusted life due to their healthy outlook on life. There are various levels of emotional maturity. The final level is emotional detachment which is the direct consequence of the true understanding of emotions and therefore, letting go of all the emotions, either good or bad and feeling happy. Emotional maturity is a significant predictor of the level of success that an individual achieves in his/her lifetime. Success includes wealth, general level of happiness, self-confidence, success in relationships, etc. where emotional maturity plays a significant role to get success.

Keywords: *Emotion; Maturity; Emotional Maturity; Natural Growth.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotions are "voices of our soul", parts of us that are closest to our inner core, to our primordial, spontaneous and intuitive being. Whenever there is a conflict between rational thinking and emotions – if the emotions are healthy – my experience leads me to believe that emotions will usually contain information that is more relevant. Emotion is the energy which makes the mind work. It supplies the energy for survival. Emotions are physical and mental feelings and are necessary for life and stimulate one to behave in a certain way. There is a difference, between emotional maturity and immaturity. The difference lies in careful thought, putting it to use constructively. We can control emotions by:

- Realizing that there are negative and positive ways to react to an impulse that comes into our mind and developing the ability to choose the way we want to react, rather than allowing it to be automatic. In other words, we can reprogram our behavior.
- Understanding that we have been in practice from infancy to react the way we presently do.

Since emotions are parts of our core being, we cannot ignore them without consequences. Many religious and New Age approaches suggest that people reject, ignore, conquer or "rise above" emotions, resulting in deep inner conflicts that can lead to even more suppression, control and fear of self-awareness. Most unhealthy emotions are deeply connected to

a toxic self-image. When we block unpleasant emotions, we also block pleasant ones, since they are all intertwined. To small, dependent children, immature behavior of people around them can be so frightening that they try to absorb the shock by creating limiting beliefs and suppressing their feelings.

II. HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY EMOTIONS

Though it is difficult to distinguish healthy emotions clearly from unhealthy emotions yet a few guidelines are given below:

A. Healthy Emotions:

- Healthy emotions motivate us and give us energy for appropriate action.
- The intensity of emotions is appropriate to the situation.
- We usually have no problem expressing them, as those parts of us were able to mature because they could be recognized and expressed within our families.
- We might feel problems and tension, though, if our adult emotions are mixed with unhealthy feelings and guilt. This is most common, since many people learn at an early age to feel guilty if they express their feelings sincerely.
- There is no tension and discomfort left once the situation is resolved
- We do not feel humiliated or bad about ourselves, nor do we feel a need to humiliate or hurt others.

B. Unhealthy Emotions:

- Unhealthy emotions are either overly intense or suppressed.
- They are followed by an inner conflict, usually between guilt and shame on one side, and anger on the other, accompanied by unpleasant bodily sensations. This conflict can persist long after the unpleasant situation is over. Even if we are objectively right, such emotions can show us that there is a part of our that either is frightened or feels guilty.
- These inner conflicts sap our energy and, if prolonged, result in stress and tiredness
- We feel that you are right, and the other person is wrong.

- We feel uncomfortable and doubtful about ourselves, which may motivate us to criticize and find even more faults in other people.

III. EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Emotional maturity is defined as how well you are able to respond to situations, control your emotions and behave in an adult manner when dealing with others. Emotional maturity means, in essence, controlling your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you. That does not mean we should hide or repress our emotions, though we can use muscle relaxation, yoga, guided imagery and other relaxation tools to reduce their intensity. Fortunately, we can control our thoughts by becoming aware of our negative and inaccurate beliefs and ideas. Emotional maturity is not related to physical maturity; these two phenomena are poles apart. Emotional maturity is expected to be but, does not grow with your chronological age; which means that no matter how old you are it does not guarantee your emotional maturity. Emotionally mature people are sensible people who take full control of their lives. To say the least, they do not whine, crib or play the blame game; rather they reflect on their lives and on the role that they play in other people's lives. These people are not on a constant look out for an excuse. Life for them is not a show, therefore every emotion that these emotionally mature people project are real and sorted. These people do not try to complicate their own and other people's lives. It is suffice to say that emotionally mature people lead a well adjusted life due to their healthy outlook on life. Emotional maturity has many different levels. Its initial level comprises of being aware of your effect on your own life and being responsible for it, not putting your failures on others. Next comes the part where a person starts to get honest with his/her own emotions, not projecting idealistic emotions but being comfortable in exhibiting the real emotions. As one goes upwards in the direction of attaining ultimate emotional maturity, one becomes emotionally open and does not give into suppressing his/her feelings. The next level comprises of the task to become emotionally decisive which can be attained by respecting our own feelings. And, finally reaching the level of emotional detachment which is the direct consequence of the true understanding of emotions and therefore, letting go of all the emotions, whether good or bad; leaving one feeling fulfilled and happy.

A. Characteristics of Emotional Maturity

Dr. Jerome Murray has given following characteristics of emotionally mature people.

1) Easy Flow of Love & Affection

Emotionally mature people are open to love and affection. They have the ability to trust people and trust themselves for the receiving and giving of love. They do not have obstructions in their personalities, hampering their ability to believe in goodness of life. A mature person can show his vulnerability by expressing love and accepting expressions of love from those who love him.

2) Face To Face With Reality

Emotionally mature people do not waste their time and resources in living in denial like emotionally immature people. They see the situations in life for what they are and not manufacture their own truth and parallel reality. Emotionally mature people always eagerly face the truth of life and are not scared to deal with difficult situations. They do not have shells

like emotionally immature people to hide into, while others around them clear up their mess. The immature avoid facing reality. Overdue bills, interpersonal problems, indeed any difficulties which demand character and integrity are avoided and even denied by the immature.

3) Hands on Experience of Life

Emotionally mature people find it easy to learn from their life experiences. This comes from their ability to see everything in positive light and accepting the reality of life. Whereas an emotionally immature person learns nothing from life; he always conceives the life situations in distortion and never in actuality.

4) Taking Criticism Positively

A mature person views life experiences as positive and he enjoys and revels in life. When they are negative he accepts personal responsibility and is confident he can learn from them to improve his life. The immature person curses the rain while a mature person sells umbrellas. Being emotionally mature means that one knows his/her flaws and strengths.

5) Hopefulness

Emotionally mature people are hopeful in life, always hoping for the best. They see goodness in everything and never resort to pessimistic tendencies. This makes them confident individuals, always ready to face the life with confidence and self-assurance.

6) Interested in Giving as in Receiving

He is a good loser. He can endure defeat and disappointment without whining or complaining. A mature person's sense of personal security permits him to consider the needs of others and give from his personal resources, whether money, time, or effort, to enhance the quality of life of those he loves. They are also able to allow others to give to them. Balance and maturity go hand in hand.

7) Ability to Learn from Experience

The ability to face reality and to relate positively to life experiences derive from the ability to learn from experience. He is honestly glad when others enjoy success or good fortune.

8) The Ability to Handle Hostility Constructively

When frustrated, the immature person looks for someone to blame. The mature person looks for a solution. Immature people attack people; mature people attack problems. The mature person uses his anger as an energy source and, when frustrated, redoubles his efforts to find solutions to his problems.

9) Open-Minded

He does not worry about things he cannot help. He is open-minded enough to listen thoughtfully to the opinions of others. He plans things in advance rather than trusting to the inspiration of the moment. He is not a chronic "fault-finder."

B. LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Generally there are six levels of Emotional Maturity.

Basic Emotional Responsibility- When a person reaches level one of emotional maturity, they realize that they can no longer view their emotional states as the responsibility of external forces such as people, places, things, forces, fate, and spirits. They learn to drop expressions from their speech that

show disownership of feelings and a helpless or victim attitude towards their feelings.

Emotional Honesty- Emotional honesty concerns the willingness of the person to know their own feelings. This is a necessary step to self-understanding and acceptance. They are related solely to the person's conscious and unconscious fears of dealing directly with the critical voices they hear inside.

Emotional Openness- This level concerns the person's willingness and skills in sharing their feelings in an appropriate manner and at appropriate times. Persons at this level experience and learn the value of ventilating feelings, and also the dangers involved in hiding feelings from self and others. At this level, one has the openness, the freedom to experience any emotion without the need, the compulsion to suppress or repress it.

Emotional Assertiveness- The person at this level of work enters a new era of positive self-expression. The primary goal here is to be able to ask for and to receive the nurturing that one needs and wants--first from self and then from others. As a secondary goal, persons should learn how to express any feeling appropriately in any situation, i.e., without aggressive overtones. This person makes time for their feelings--they prize and respect them. Such understand the connection between suppressed feelings, stress, and illness.

Emotional Understanding- Persons on this level understand the actual cause and effect process of emotional responsibility and irresponsibility. Self-concepts are known as "the" problem. They realize that it is not possible to have a so-called good self-concept without a complimentary bad self-concept. Such experience firsthand, that because of the nature of knowledge and the formation of self-concepts, that all self-concepts contain their opposites.

Emotional Detachment- At this level the person lives without the burden and snare of self-concepts, self-images, self-constructs, and all group-concepts and thing-concepts. They are only aware of self as process, as a sensing being, as an experiencing being, as a living vessel, as unknowable and untrappable because it is alive and not static or fixed. True detachment from all self-concepts has occurred. Thus true detachment from others has also occurred, which means that absolute emotional responsibility has been achieved.

IV. CONCLUSION

Emotional maturity means, in essence, controlling your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you. That does not mean we should hide or repress our emotions, though we can use muscle relaxation, yoga, guided imagery and other relaxation tools to reduce their intensity. An emotionally mature person will have many of the following traits:

- Knowing what one wants and making it happen
- Thinking before acting and having control over one's behavior
- Patience, self-reliance and the ability to take responsibility for one's life and actions
- The ability to connect with others in a cooperative and positive way

- Genuinely caring about others and demonstrating that ability
- Honesty and living by one's principles
- Having moderation and balance in all things
- Having the ability to follow through, even when it is difficult
- Emotional maturity is a significant predictor of the level of success that an individual achieves in their lifetime.

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